

## **Voucher Management System January 2009 Release**

Updated software for the Voucher Management System (VMS) will be implemented on January 9, 2009. This document provides the highlights of the changes that will occur, as well as information on some other VMS issues. A revised User's Guide will also be posted to the VMS website.

### **Highlights of the Release**

1. The process of locking submitted VMS data for each month or quarter at a point in time will be eliminated. A PHA will be able to change data for any month at any time. This decision was made possible by the introduction of other system enhancements that satisfactorily address the need to provide for consistent and accurate data. This change will be effective as soon as the updated software is implemented on January 9. At present, data through December 2007 is locked; these fields will be un-locked.
2. As a result of unlocking all data, PHAs will no longer be required to use the Data Change Request process in order to correct data for previously locked periods. Any data changes entered by PHAs for any month will be subject to the on-line edit review process, in the same manner that new data is edited. This is intended to protect the integrity of the database. This change will be effective as soon as the updated software is implemented on January 9. PHAs should remember that, whenever they have entered a data change that results in the need for approval of a hard edit, the PHA will be unable to enter additional data or changes until that edit is approved by the financial analyst.
3. The error messages have been revised to more clearly state the type of error or variance that has occurred. The current and revised error messages are shown on the first spreadsheet provided with this document.
4. A number of new fields have been introduced for the purpose of improved reporting and to meet specific data requirements. These fields, and their descriptions, are shown on the second spreadsheet provided with this document.
5. A number of discrepancies in the on-line edit process were identified during the implementation of the last release, in October 2008. These discrepancies have been resolved. As examples, PHAs were receiving an error message that their total HAP Expenses were out-of-range, when they were not; PHAs were receiving error messages on VASH and tenant protection units and FSS expenses because the PHAs' programs were not being recognized.

## **VMS Issues**

1. As referenced above, PHAs are reminded that they should immediately contact their financial analyst at the Financial Management Center (FMC) when they have data that requires a hard edit review, so the review can be completed as soon as possible. This is necessary because a PHA user is unable to enter additional data or changes as long as there is a pending hard edit review. This process is even more important now that PHAs will have access to update any prior data in VMS.
2. On January 7, 2009, PHAs were advised by the FMC to delay the entry of December 2008 data until notified by HUD, after the new software release had been installed. This was necessary because the new release makes minor modifications to the HUD 52681B data entry form, and we want all PHAs to use the new version for their December data. Please note that any December data that has been or is entered before the new release is implemented will be deleted, and it will be necessary for the PHAs to re-enter and re-submit.
3. In the Q&As posted by HUD after the October VMS broadcast, PHAs were advised to report in VMS all Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) leasing and all related HAP expenses. PHAs are here further advised that this reporting should include all HCVP participants under HAP contract. The reporting is not to include households that are terminated from the HCVP (even if it is a temporary cost-saving measure) and are then assisted under another program such as the HOME, where funds are ineligible for use in the HCVP. If a PHA reports leasing and HAP expenses where the funding has come from an eligible source other than HAP funds (e.g., administrative fee reserves), HUD may request an annual accounting for those funds
4. Most of the error messages associated with the VMS data entry are easily understood and relate to the requirement to report HAP expenses if leasing is reported in a voucher category or to the requirement that a PHA must have units awarded in a specific category in order to report in that category. For two fields, however, Total Unit Months Leased and Total HAP, the edit checks and potential error messages are based on a comparison of data to a standard or a comparison of data to prior periods. Further explanation of these edits may help PHAs understand and respond to the error messages, and is shown on the third spreadsheet provided with this document.
5. Questions have been received on the edit applied to Tenant Protection units leased. This edit is based on all TP units awarded to the PHA; it is not limited to active TP increments.

6. When a PHA responds to an error message by selecting the “Other” option, the PHA must enter an explanatory comment. PHAs are reminded that the comment field provides for a total of 256 characters; no more should be entered. Comments should be clear enough to enable the financial analyst to review the data accordingly and make a decision on approval.
7. PHAs are reminded to report VMS data promptly, by the end of the following month. Some PHAs have expressed concerns that they do not have their final administrative expenses or disaster program expenses by that point. Reporting should not be delayed; the data can always be updated if final reconciliation for the month indicates a change.